

SECTION 31-J

Community gardens task force

Agriculture & Markets (AGM) CHAPTER 69, ARTICLE 2-C

§ 31-j. Community gardens task force. 1. The commissioner shall convene a community gardens task force to identify and develop ways to encourage state agencies, municipalities and private parties to establish and expand community gardens and the activities conducted by such gardens.

2. The task force shall be chaired by the commissioner, or by such officer or employee of the department as shall be designated by the commissioner. The membership of the task force may include representation from appropriate state agencies and members that represent existing community gardens, counties, cities, towns, villages, school districts, other special use districts, public authorities and cooperative extension services. Membership of the task force shall include at least two representatives from organizations dedicated to the promotion, expansion or protection of community gardens.

3. The commissioner, may request the assistance of state agencies to carry out the work of the task force.

4. (a) The goals of the task force may include, but are not limited to, the study, evaluation and development of recommendations: (i) to encourage the establishment and expansion of community gardens by state agencies, municipal governments and private parties, (ii) to encourage cooperation between the activities and operations of community gardens and provision of donated food to local voluntary food assistance programs for the poor and disadvantaged, (iii) to increase the benefits that community gardens may provide to the local community in which they are located, (iv) to encourage cooperation with community-based organizations to increase the opportunities for seniors, those aged sixty years of age or older, to participate in community gardens, (v) to encourage the expansion of the production of fresh fruits and vegetables in areas served by community gardens so that such fresh produce can be consumed locally to help encourage healthier life styles and wellness, and to help reduce the incidence of adult and childhood obesity, (vi) to develop after school programs that establish, maintain and expand community gardens, and (vii) to encourage the development and expansion of community gardens in food deserts as defined in section two hundred sixty of this chapter.

(b) In achieving the goals of the task force, the task force may consider recommendations that: (i) encourage the execution of

conservation easements by state agencies, municipalities or private parties to establish or protect community gardens, (ii) encourage the creation of mechanisms to transfer development rights to protect community gardens or encourage the donation or lease of lands for community gardens, (iii) development of model zoning codes, local land use laws or other municipal policies that could encourage the establishment or retention of community gardens, and (iv) any other activity to achieve the goals deemed appropriate by the task force according to the provisions of this article.

5. The task force shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature on or before January first, two thousand twenty-three and on or before January first of each fifth year thereafter on the status of community gardens in New York state. Such report shall include:

- (a) the number, nature and geographic location of community gardens;
- (b) a description of the costs, benefits and impacts of community gardens;
- (c) an assessment of the successes, failures and barriers in developing, maintaining and expanding community gardens;
- (d) lists of funding sources available to develop and expand community gardens along with the requirements for obtaining the funding;
- (e) an assessment of the funding, requirements and barriers for double the number of existing community gardens;
- (f) a discussion of the goals outlined in subdivision four of this section and a description of the steps and projects undertaken to meet the goals for the task force as established in this section;
- (g) an action plan for doubling the number of community gardens in the state of New York;
- (h) recommendations for developing, maintaining and expanding community gardens in food deserts; and
- (i) any other recommendations or assessments the task force deems appropriate for the report.

Between report due dates, the commissioner shall maintain the necessary records and data required to satisfy such report requirements and to satisfy information requests received from the governor and the legislature between such report due dates.